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FLOOR DEBATE

March 17, 2004 LB 1083

SENATOR CUDABACK: Debate does cease. Senator Tyson, you're recognized to close on your amendment, AM3211 to FA1574.

SENATOR TYSON: Thank you, Mr. President. As far as I can tell, not too many people spoke on my amendment itself, so I'll try and refresh your memory. It states that such community-based services shall have been in operation for not less than six months. That's the cogent point. And again, what we are looking for is the sustainability of community services. Now there's been a lot of learned comment. And I'm not authorized to speak for Chief of Police Tom Cassidy, but I know that were I to be authorized to speak for him, that he would be appreciative of Senator Johnson's direction-giving. And I'm not even too sure the directions are right, but that's all right. Senator Johnson mentioned a couple of other things. Omaha doesn't have a psychiatric facility. They did have, back until about 1984 or '85, when they closed Nebraska Psychiatric Institute, which had more beds than they say are now necessary for Omaha, and Omaha is a lot larger than it was 19 years ago. In April of last year, they didn't have a psychiatric facility. They had had one, but it closed that month. The reason they closed is that Methodist Hospital couldn't afford it anymore. Beginning in 1994, when they lost \$800,000, they never again lost less than \$1 million; \$2.5 million, \$1.9 million, \$1.7 million, \$1.7 million, \$3.5 million, \$2.6 million, \$3.6 million, \$4.6 million, and the year that they closed, which was last year, \$3.5 million; a total, in ten years, of \$26.4 million. Omaha, which now desperately needs \$15 million to \$20 million of state money--that's the figure given in testimony to the Health and Human Services Committee, Mr. Marr, I believe--give us \$15 million to \$20 million and we'll do the job. Hell, give me \$15 million or \$20 million and I'll do the job. I don't know how long I can sustain it. And they don't make any promises. I do want to read some of Chief Cassidy's remarks that were made to the Health and Human Services Committee. And evidently Senator Johnson either wasn't there or had left the room or wasn't paying attention. We've been told that the state may turn to hospitals in part to fill this need, but my own experience in this regard has not inspired our confidence. Fewer hospitals in Nebraska are providing psychiatric services